

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 0527

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PERP, IV FR
SUBJECT: STATEMENT BY GISCARD ON FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN
FRENCH POLITICS

REF: ABIDJAN 497 (NOTAL)

1. WE NOTE THAT 16 JANUARY ISSUE OF NEW YORK TIMES AND 17
JANUARY ISSUE OF PARIS TRIBUNE CARRIED BRIEF ARTICLES ON GISCARD'S
PRESS CONFERENCE IN YAMOUSSOUKRO. THE ARTICLES REPORT THAT GISCARD
STATED HE WOULD NOT TOLERATE ANY FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN FRENCH
POLITICS AND IMPLY GISCARD HAD IN MIND PRESIDENT CARTER'S ALLEGED
ATTITUDE TOWARD FRENCH AND ITALIAN CP'S. THIS REMARK WAS NOT
CARRIED IN IVORIAN PRESS ACCOUNT. ACCORDING TO VOA CORRESPONDENT
WHO ATTENDED PRESS CONFERENCE, THE FOLLOWING IS WHAT ACTUALLY
TOOK PLACE.

2. TOWARD THE END OF HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, GISCARD WONDERED IF
IVORIAN CORRESPONDENTS HAD ANY QUESTIONS. UP TO THAT POINT, THEY
HAD RATHER SHYLY STOOD ASIDE, WHILE THE FOREIGN PRESS ASKED THE
QUESTIONS. THERE THEN FOLLOWED WHAT VOA CORRESPONDENT DESCRIBES
AS A SERIES OF INEPT QUESTIONS. FINALLY, AN IVORIAN JOURNALIST
BEGAN BY STATING THAT WHILE THE MAJORITY IN FRANCE APPEARED DIS-
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ORGANIZED, SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS WERE GAINING POPULARITY. NOW,
ALTHOUGH RELATIONS BETWEEN IVORY COAST AND FRANCE ARE PRESENTLY
VERY GOOD, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE FRENCH OPPOSITION WINS? VOA
CORRESPONDENT REPORTS THAT GISCARD BRISTLED AND STATED THAT WHEN
HE TRAVELED ABROAD HE ABIDED BY THE PRINCIPLE OF NOT DISCUSSING
FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS, AND THAT HE DID NOT PERMIT ANYONE TO
INTERFERE IN FRENCH INTERNAL AFFAIRS. AT THIS POINT, HOUPHOUET,

OBVIOUSLY ANGRY AT THE CORRESPONDENT, ADDED THAT THE IVORY COAST ALSO ADHERED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF NOT INTERFERING IN FRANCE'S OR ANYBODY ELSE'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

3. ACCORDING TO VOA CORRESPONDENT, TO ANYONE WHO SAW THE EXCHANGE, IT WAS CLEAR THAT GISCARD'S REPLY WAS AIMED AT THE JOURNALIST FOR HAVING ASKED AN EMBARRASSING AND IRRELEVANT QUESTION AND CERTAINLY NOT AT PRESIDENT CARTER OR ANYBODY ELSE. IN ANY CASE, THIS PARTICULAR JOURNALIST IS NOW IN HOUPHOUET'S DOGHOUSE. THIS AND OTHER PORTIONS OF PRESS CONFERENCE WERE DELETED FROM PUBLISHED ACCOUNTS AND FROM SUBSEQUENT RADIO AND TELEVISION REPLAYS.
STEARNS

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